

FAY STEVENS
BODMIN LANDSCAPE PROJECT DIARY 1997

⚙ SATURDAY JUNE 7TH ~ DAY 1

Arrival at Juliot's Well Holiday park. Had a quick look at the camping field to find a pleasant place to pitch while waiting for Sue and Mike to arrive with our gear. Decided on a spot where I can see the wind machines on the hill through the tent entrance. I'm already taken with watching them, their movement is graceful and somehow reassuring, it's quite meditative. Finally pitched my tent realising I am the only person camping !

⚙ SUNDAY JUNE 8TH ~ DAY 2

Wind machines facing west.

Wonderful walk to the site, shifting clouds forming patterns on the landscape. I felt quite stiff after having fallen down a flight of stairs on Friday.

The morning was assigned to a tour of the site. It poured with rain at the stone row and my legs ~ without waterproofs ~ were drenched. It felt good, although I think I will call my flatmate and ask her to send my waterproof leggings with I left on the fridge ~ in order not to forget them !

I am immediately intrigued with the different landscapes experienced between the Western and Southern sides of the site ~ not quite sure which I prefer on first impressions. Enjoyed the walk up to the quoit which seemed to centre the site for me until then it felt as if it was floating and shape shifting. This feeling was probably due to unfamiliarity of the site and the shifting patterns on the land created by the clouds and light. I wonder if I will feel the same about the quoit in a few days ? Lots of ideas and thoughts thrown at us throughout the tour, we didn't really have any time to absorb one idea until another was presented.

Worked on 'Helen's cairn' in the afternoon. I was quite uncomfortable from the fall and felt awkward in my movements. Sue and Helen discussed a tunnel/passageway in a section of the cairn which Sue thought was a coming out of passageway and Helen a going into ~ or was it the other way round ?

⚙ MONDAY JUNE 9TH ~ DAY 3

Wind machines facing South ~ barely discernible through the mist so much so that only the bottom of the moving blades could be seen ~ it looked eerie.

Walked to the site today in a heavy mist. Waited a while for the others to arrive and so huddled next to a stone and stared into the mist watching the shape of the stones.

Sue arrived and asked for a volunteer to help in 'Mike's hut' I decided to go and to try and orient myself in the mist by heading for the quoit to see if I could find it and if it could guide me to Mike's hut ~ it worked !

Found part of a bone on the way to tea and decided to add it to the 'material culture' collection accumulating there. It had wonderful shape and form and I wanted to add it to the military shrapnel that the collection appears to mostly comprise in the hope that it might be a more wholesome addition.

⊗ TUESDAY JUNE 10TH ~ DAY 4

Wind machines facing East.

The sky seemed different this morning, flatter clouds and more settled.

We had to map our movements on site throughout the day today, I wonder if there are any well used pathways/patterns apart from the obvious i.e. lunch/tea etc. that we all use but individually? Another request is to choose a favoured stone, spot - anything that we would like to be photographed. Apart from an immediate fondness of H29 and a particular stone incorporated in it - which seems and feels as if it has been deliberately selected and embodied within the structure for its aesthetic qualities, I have been thinking about a photograph depicting the two lives of the stones on the site. That is the exposed - overground and unexposed - underground with the visible exposed landscape and the invisible unexposed landscape beneath the soil becoming exposed through our excavations. The pinkish tinge of the rock when exposed by excavation is particularly beautiful and a great contrast to the grey, weathered texture and colour of the exposed rock. I wonder though how a photograph could successfully depict this.

Arrived back at the camp site to a parcel from my flat mate containing waterproof leggings and goodies - thanks Emma x

⊗ WEDNESDAY JUNE 11TH ~ DAY 5

Heavy mist, couldn't see the wind machines - I wonder which way they are facing?

Thoughts this morning walking to the site on why so far there have been so few finds. Had an interesting chat with Gary about it who mentioned studies on gypsy life whose lifestyle - according to us - appears to be dirty, almost squalid created by their rubbish deposition on the outskirts of their chosen place to stay. This impression to us looking from the outside is quite inaccurate, their living space is overtly clean and structured. The rubbish boundary also provides protection to the gypsies deterring any strangers from entering - could this be the case with the settlers of Leskernick?

It also crossed my mind that the whole site may be a Bronze Age folly.

⊗ THURSDAY JUNE 12TH ~ DAY 6

Wind machines facing South.

Dan and I have been working on H39 for the past three days. Excavating and drawing a section of a part of a wall of the house. I have been mulling over the different forms of visual representation on site ranging from functional plans and sections to function plans and sections with interpretation to atmospheric, ambient photographs. I wonder

if they would compliment each other and work together in harmony or whether they would be self contained.

Sue worked mostly at H39 today - it was lovely to have her around for a while - she is amazingly busy and spends a lot of time moving from one working area to another. As a consequence one usually only gets a fleeting 5 minutes with her throughout the day.

Spent most of the day trowling the North East quadrant of the house. This practical aspect of excavation has a wonderful aesthetic quality. I enjoy feeling the different textures of the soil horizons, watching for subtle changes in colour and the varied and quite distinct acoustics - it's a very sensorial experience. I'm also feeling much better from the fall now and much more mobile.

Justin trowling in another quadrant found a pottery shred today with a very contained 'Oo er'. Sue - sitting on a stone nearby talking to Helen simply would not believe it and must have said at least four times on the short walk over to Justin 'are you sure it's a piece of pottery' promptly screaming when she actually saw it. Moments of wide grins and sighs of relief were quickly quashed as discussions started as to which soil horizon did it actually come from, what position it was lying in etc..

The afternoon was spent continuing to trowel the quadrant while Sue and Eric cleaned the entrance to the house. At the end of the day H39 looked very different and I think we all felt quite elated. The entrance to the house is quite distinct and very inviting, I simply had to walk through it.

Walked back what is known as the 'Hamilton' route where the landscape is quite different, less exposed and more protective. An almost jubilant ride home in the van with Mike driving, me in the front and Sue, Angus, Dan and Steve in the back - lots of talking and laughing - Happy days.....

☼ FRIDAY JUNE 13TH - DAY 7

Wind machines facing East.

DAY OFF !

Angus, Dan, Steve, Tony and I decide to take a trip to Tintagel.

A short lie in with arrangements to meet Angus, Dan and Steve at their caravan at 9:30. The caravan however was extremely quiet when I arrived - they were still asleep. I sat outside the caravan a while and read feeling quite motherly, knowing they were safe and warm.

A quick pint in the pub in Camelford while waiting for the bus and we were on our way. An air of excitement surrounded us - I'm sure we felt as if we were escaping for the day !

After a reflective bus ride we found Tintagel enveloped in mist. Stopped a while on the beach for a paddle and contemplation with iridescent, vibrant myriad's of colours of the pebbles and sand through the water. I felt happy, calm and at home as I always do by the sea.

After a few glasses of mead waiting for the bus back ~ we all felt as if we had been truly Tintagled.

Angus, Dan and Steves's idea that we all eat together (I have been cooking near my tent) and that we would take it in turns to cook and after I had cooked the meal the night before, manifested itself with no one having thought about the evening meal and no food being vegan ! However a kind invite to supper with Helen, Gary, Tony and Mike W. (who was cooking a vegan chilli) was very welcome. It felt good to 'visit' and stop awhile in another caravan. My tent is quite a way from the caravan and the caravan Angus, Dan and Steve are in is quite a distance (in caravan park land) from the others. I felt a little more part of the group and not so much on the periphery.

⊗ SATURDAY JUNE 14TH ~ DAY 8

Wind Machines facing South.

A sunny day ~ what a difference!

Stopping a while in H29, I laid down and looked at the stone within the structure which I feel was particularly selected for its shape, weathering and aesthetic qualities. It has so many shapes and colours within it. It has a distinctive different weathering with grooves, cracks, colours and lichen. These together create a focus in this house. Amongst other abstract forms and shapes, I can see a figure which looks as if it is leaning out of the stone itself. Maybe it was a story telling stone, each person who looks at it will see different shapes and colours ~ all inspirations for a good story . H29 does not seem to have a huge earthfast stone embodied within its structure in contrast to many of the other houses that do. The stones comprising this house seem to be smaller, more graceful, calmer and peaceful. It has quite a different ambience .

An unexpected dip in the pool at the campsite and the end of the day. Angus, Dan and I getting quite involved in a game of waterpolo with some children staying on the site. Explosions of laughter and joviality ~ great fun !

⊗ SUNDAY JULY 1ST ~ DAY 9

Wind machines facing North.

Another Sunny day ! with a visit from Henry the dog who visited the site yesterday ~ I rather like him and was pleased to see him.

Stayed on site at the end of the working day to watch/help stone painting. Felt quite uncomfortable after helping Chris wrap a stone in cling film ~ it looked as if it was suffocating. After a while I returned to H39 and could not immediately see anyone so I followed the red painted stones until I found them. I'm not completely sure with the bright 'poppy red' colour the stones are being painted in and would probably have thought an ochre or more muted colour more appropriate. However Chris told me ~ quite abruptly ~ that he was a neo modernist and that poppy red was a deliberate choice !

We gathered in H28 for a glass of wine. It was wonderful to actually stop a while on site and watch the surrounding landscape. The hills nearby looked peaceful and protective I realised how very fond and attached I was becoming to Leskernick.

Walking back (the Hamilton route) through sunny dappled valleys - a perfect way to end the day. The journey home with entertainment from Justin's Tipsey tape bizarre music strangely fitting in with what appeared to be a rather surreal evening. Peculiar goings on the way home, passing an elderly woman pushing a wheelbarrow along the road, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, two people in a field standing around a oil drum on fire and a rather strange cow. Gary pointing out the music's tempo and style changing and reflecting the journey. Bumpy roads having quite tense dynamics with straight open roads having freer, lighter form, the tape finishing exactly as we entered the campsite.

Had a brief chat with Sue regarding the photo montage I've been thinking about over the past few days. Tomorrow I'll be working with Helen backfilling the cairn while photographing it.

⊗ MONDAY JUNE 16TH - DAY 10

Wind machines facing North.

The red painted stones seem to have effectively and easily fitted into the landscape. Although there are noticeable they do not appear to be intrusive. Thoughts last night on abstractions of forms in this case by paint or by the addition or subtraction of a structure can either draw one towards or repel one from the feature. Yesterday I did find the 'poppy red' quite intrusive. However today the red seems a little muted and has comfortably become part of the structure. I sat next to one of the painted stones in H28 at lunchtime and felt quite at home with it.

Photographs today of our favourite place, naturally saw me back in H29 and the stone. I initially felt quite uncomfortable and protective about revealing my thoughts and feelings about the stone, it felt like a secret. I particularly wanted the photograph of the stone to incorporate the different textures of the grasses in front and the hills and sky behind - I wonder how it will turn out ?

The backfilling today of the cairn enabled me to photograph three stages of the photograph (1. natural & soil, 2. rubble infill, 4. rubble and soil).

A member of staff at the campsite pub passed to Angus and myself a survey map left in the pub by Chris this evening. We promptly took it to his caravan and left it with a ransom note requiring payment by - what were quite extravagant alcohol demands. I wonder if he'll cough up ?

⊗ TUESDAY JUNE 17TH - DAY 11

Wind machines facing North East.

Thoughts last night on the photographic montage. I have such a clear idea in my mind as to how it will look with the combination of light, form and texture. It is all however locked onto film in the camera and will have to wait until I get home and process it.

Turfing the cairn today was wonderful ! It felt like creating a giant mosaic with different colours and textures of grass. I found this very therapeutic and meditative.

I asked Helen, Mike and Tony who were also turfing what they would cover the cairn with if it wasn't turf. Replies:-

Tony ~ (immediately) Chocolate !

Mike~ Weaved string.

Helen ~ Something fluffy ~ then I can roll on it.

The completion of the turfing also saw the completion of the photo montage !

Barbara held a party in their caravan this evening. We are all scattered on site, it was a good idea to get together in one place. A lovely atmosphere and a rather impressive cairn cake. I passed Sue a quote I found I had previously scribbled in my note book from Andy Goldsworthy which seemed to fit so well with the site.

'A stone is passive, a witness to the place in which it sits, it is a focus, the core, the remains of something that was larger; its movement is one of erosion ..'

A sad farewell today to the very lovely Penny who has been driving Angus, Dan, Steve and myself to and from site. We have all become rather fond of her; we've become quite a family.

☼ WEDNESDAY JUNE 18TH - DAY 12

Wind machines facing North.

I am having vivid dreams of the soil acoustics, earth hues, rain textures, skylscapes ~ I feel more a part of the land, more integrated with it.

Helped Sue and Mike with site photographs today sparking off more thoughts on visual representation of a site. These particular photographs used scales and were a contrast to the photographs taken individually by us of our favourite place. It struck me that photographs have limitations, there is a strong possibility that the photograph will not be quite as one would have imagined, the colours might not be true, the textures and forms may not adequately portray the dimensions seen by the eye. I wonder if it would be a good idea to encourage people to draw/paint their impressions, feelings of the site as well as photograph them, these two mediums may compliment each other well.

The walk back from the site saw the sky full of billowing clouds hanging low in the sky, a moving mass across the moor into a brighter sunnier horizon, The wind machines in the distance lit by the sun created geometry moving in conflict with the sky ~ they looked fantastic, bright white masts and blades.

☼ THURSDAY JUNE 19TH - DAY 13

Wind machines facing North.

Written on Friday morning in my tent, rain beating on canvas, Debussy on the radio.

The weather conditions are so bad, it has been decided we will not go on site today. This sees a welcome morning to catch up on our fieldnotes books which are almost impossible to write on site.

An afternoon trip to a Bronze Age hut reconstruction and an introduction to the farmer who built it. A handsome man who engaged us all (Sue, MikeST, Eric, Justin, MikeW, Tony, Gary, Angus, Dan & Steve) with his enthusiasm.

A tasty pint - as recommended by Gary - of Doom Bar in the Rising Sun. Thoughts on the way home on the stone in H28 and secrets in a place of settlement using the caravan site as an example. I deliberately placed my tent in a then empty field in order to look at the wind machines from the tent opening. Now two caravans obscure my view but it's OK because I knew the wind machines are there. Maybe the caravans will go in a few days and the view will return. Maybe they will stay, in which case they only sign left on my departure will be a temporary patch of yellow grass that will easily rejuvenate itself. I have my memories of this place and maybe one day someone will as I have done deliberately place the tent there for the very same reason or maybe a friend will because I told them of it. I wonder how many views or places on Leskernick are seen or are being used in the same way.

☼ FRIDAY JUNE 20TH - DAY 13

Wind machines facing North-West.

'DAY OFF SITE'

Angus, Barbara, Eric, Gary, Mike W., Tony, Wayne and I decided to go to Botallack to see David Kemp's exhibition 'Art of Darkness'.

An exhibition, under the guise of a museum display of an antiquated (Iron Age) culture. A sunset culture with cult objects, artefacts and tools reflecting a reoccurring theme of sun worship. A middle period showing fire technology imitating the mythical powers of sky gods. The 'hot box technology' late period illustrating fire from devices that threaten to block the sun. All 'artefacts' are made from recycled scrap. Fantastic imagery, cunning use of materials that inspired us all and raised a few chuckles.

Also the Glen Onwin 'Blood of the Pelican' instillation located in a shaking shed at the Geevor Tin Mine. Adapted kite and square shaped structures filled with local mineral colouring the water (black = waste coal processing, white = china clay, red = oxide dust from tin ore, yellow = ochre). A blustery, windy day outside rattled the loose roof structure, gusting through holes in the roof. This did not however distract from the tranquillity present within the building.

A drink in the Star at St. Just brought back memories of a recent visit there and a sozzled, midnight cycle back to Penzance.

☼ SATURDAY JUNE 21ST - DAY 14

Wind machines facing West.

An incredible windy, wet day on the moor. I found myself sponging the trenches of H39 which although is a useful tool in the bailing and drying out of a waterlogged area nevertheless struck me momentarily as being quite absurd.

Another sad farewell, this time to Tony who skipped off the moor, it must have felt strange.

All of us quite tired tonight. After attempts to dry our clothes and a warm supper we all had an early night. Hope the weather improves tomorrow.

☼ TUESDAY JUNE 21ST - DAY 17

Wind machines facing West.

The weather for the past three days has been extreme. Leskernick has been unforgiving and we have all been battling with the elements. It has been exhilarating but exhausting.

It was arranged that today I spend with the survey team. A drive with Barbara to site was an opportunity to get to know her a little better and today offers an opportunity to work with other members of the survey team. I did feel (and it was commented - jokingly ?) that I was moving over to 'the other side'. This highlights the excavator/surveyor divide which I am told is no way near as bad as last year !?! Umm..

With a little trepidation, fed by comments and ribbing last night and this morning about my 'defection' and a little uncertainty as to what I might be doing, I found myself very much at home and excited trying to find structures within the clutter. It made such a difference to raise my eyes from an excavation trench and explore the site, this freedom of vision inspiring new thoughts and ideas enabling a more holistic approach to the site, its surrounds and what the aspirations of our work here are.

Walked over to Codda with MikeW. and Henry offered an alternative view of the site which appeared from there to be more secret and secluded. The newly painted white rocks were very distinctive. Our placing of flags on site where the quoit became visible saw heated but nonetheless hilarious conversations on the importance of ones height when doing this. Inspired by the quite marked difference in height amongst us and very quickly quashed by the tallest member of the team ! I was inspired while doing this to possibly take photographs showing the 4 maybe five different forms/identities of the quoit.

This evening Angus and I walked back via Brown Willey and Roughtor. After almost sinking in the marshes we stopped for a rest on top of Brown Willey where Angus miraculously produced a vegan pastie ! The white rocks on site were still very distinctive even from this distance. Roughtor felt like a moonscape, a huge sculpture of ephemeral forms and shapes.

☼ WEDNESDAY JUNE 23RD - DAY 18

Wind machines facing North West.

Interesting chat with Chris about the stone in H29 . He agrees that it may have been specifically selected for its aesthetic qualities and we had a conversation about the combination of sociology and archaeology on site. He has decided to look at other houses to see if any other have a 'special' stone ~ I wonder how it went ?

Turfing (!) H39 today finding myself having a 'chat' with Sue ~ this is the first time I have really had a conversation with her without it being for a specific reason ~ I liked it.

The bad weather is wearing us all down

⊗ THURSDAY JUNE 26TH ~ DAY 19

Wind machine facing North.

Extreme conditions with a weather alert on the radio warning of gale force winds. We all trudged on site to continue backfilling, a challenge in such appalling conditions. Mike W. saving the day by appearing with pasties and goodies. Thanks Mike x.

⊗ FRIDAY JUNE 27TH ~ DAY 20

Wind machine facing North.

All hands in H39 today to finish backfilling in yet again terrible weather. Everyone by now frayed and tired yet we all dived with Helen keeping us going with her songs. The earth by now was almost liquid and apart from being extremely heavy was very difficult to shovel into buckets and wheelbarrows and even more so to empty into the boggy trench. Ingenious walkways devised by Gary and Angus helped. Sue looked worried.

The afternoon cleared up as we cleaned and gathered the tools together and then suddenly after working on site together for three weeks (some for five) and after battling the elements together and helping each other along, we all separately and individually dispersed and walked off site.